



The Singer



25 8 6

Chapter 1 by Jake

I woke up, rolled over, and checked the clock. Only 10 minutes had gone by since I last closed my eyes. Normally I would have rolled back over and attempted to go to sleep but tonight was different. I don't know what compelled me to do this, but I threw on my slippers, grabbed my coat and walked out the front door. I had no plan, no idea where I was heading, and no idea why I felt I had to walk, but I didn't question, I just kept walking.

Block after block went by until I found myself downtown. I had never been downtown at 1 am before. It was mesmerizing! All the lights, sounds, and smells radiating down the street made me feel dizzy. Its like my town was a completely different place. As I walked down the street, I realized that I must have been quite the sight. A grown man wearing Snoopy pajama pants, slippers and a jacket walking through town in a daze. This type of thing usually would have caused me to panic, but not tonight. There was an alley ahead that seemed to be calling me so I headed towards it.

At first it looked completely dark and empty, but as I stared, my eyes adjusted to the darkness and I could see the faint outline of a door. I walked down the alley, still in my dazed state, not thinking, just moving. The sign above the door read, "Club", in the most dull way you could imagine. I checked the door handle and it was unlocked. So I opened the door and slowly walked in. As I looked around, the club was nearly empty, except for a shaggy guy in the corner passed out on the table and a singer.

I walked in and sat down at a table nearest to the singer. For some reason I was drawn to her.

She hadn't sung anything yet, but I knew I was in for the experience of a lifetime. As I sat down, she smiled, walked up to the mic, and began to sing. The most beautiful sound I've ever heard came from the speakers. Her voice was like a melody, and she had the chance. I couldn't take my eyes off her. She wasn't just singing, she was performing. Her voice was breathtaking. And that voice, that voice could save the world, and I felt like it was saving me.

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Chapter 2 by Luke Meyers



She sang long and sweet. Mesmerized, I felt cradled within each word and note. My heart broke and was made whole again through the course of every song. I struggled to believe that this experience could be real.

Finally, it was over. She closed her lips around her final note, then nodded primly before the spotlight vanished and left the stage in darkness. It was quite late, and the staff rushed we few lingering patrons out into the street. I flagged down a taxi home, dove into my waiting bed, and slept more soundly than I have ever known.

The next day, I could think of nothing else. Snatches of melody tugged at my memory, but refused to resolve. I needed to hear that music again. After a thoroughly distracted day, I went out in the evening to find "Club" again. For some reason I couldn't recall the exact location, but I thought I knew what area it was in. As I strode up and down block after block, though, I began to despair. Why couldn't I find it? Where does a club disappear to overnight? Had I been dreaming?

Chapter 3 by jeffyb



Just as I was about to give up hope and return home to my comfortable bed, from the corner of my eye I found the sign of "Club" in a narrow alleyway. The alley was completely empty and devoid of any light with the exception of the low glow of a lantern over the sign. I went to the door, only to discover that it was locked. I looked at my watch and it was just after midnight.

Surely this place would be open, right?

I put my ear to the door. I could hear the faint sound of that beautiful singing again. So I knocked. Twenty seconds later I knocked again a little harder. I heard the deadbolts being snapping open and the shaggy man cracked the door open. He looked at me up and down with his off-color eyes.

"It's not your time," he said, in a hoarse voice. "Come back when you are ready."

The door slammed.

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What did he mean? What... I walked away completely confused. As I headed back to the downtown area began to become brighter and more saturated. I felt a heaviness in my head and my hearing seemed

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slightly muted. I could smell though. I smelt everything. I could smell the oil on the asphalt, the perfume from the ladies down the block, and even the hot dogs from vendor that was barely in my eyesight.

Something tugged inside me. I felt compelled to walk home.

Chapter 4 by intellikat



I threw my keys onto the coffee table and threw my body onto the ragged couch. God, the thing smelled awful-- like stale Cheetos and menthol balm. During the entire walk home, my olfactory senses had been assaulted from every side. Dog shit, spilled gasoline, perfume, taco trucks. My head and limbs were incredible heavy and it was easy to shut my eyes and drop into what deep sleep awaited me.

When I woke, it was to my wristwatch alarm. It was Monday, and my Intro to Music class was within the hour. I dressed, inhaled something of a breakfast, grabbed my backpack from the entryway, and entered the bright light of morning. A quick pedal to Evans Hall, and I was shouldering my way through the old hallway to the lecture room and my class. When I arrived, something remarkable awaited me.

The professor was playing the first song I had heard that night at "Club" over the hall's PA system.

It was definitely the same song. But not the same singer. I remembered the haunting lyrics, and though the singer was not as impassioned, I was left with a chill up my spine.

The lecture proceeded as usual, the professor having switched off the music before beginning, and the content of the class was wholly unrelated. Upon its conclusion, I made my way down to the lecture dais and approached the professor with my questions.

"Oh, an interesting story there," he said. "I hadn't heard that record in years. The story is an interesting one, as I said. The singer is long dead. Not really much of a career before that song.

But almost instantly she became famous for it. It was written for her by one of the most fascinating songwriters in the country, which was rather unusual for the time. Abbie Carmichael. A woman who wrote an incredible amount of hits in her lifetime and after, no doubt.

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"When did she die?"

"Hard to say, because she went into seclusion in the second half of her career. But she was born around the turn of the century, so you can do the math. The most curious thing about Abbie Carmichael is that everyone who sang her songs became instantly famous almost overnight. Very curious. Her songs are incredible. Impassioned, heartfelt, haunting. Almost otherworldly."

"Would you think I was crazy to say I heard it two night ago downtown?"

"No, not really. As I said, the songs are world-renowned."

"Do you know of a place simply called 'Club' downtown? It's where I heard the song. There was this singer..." The professor's face suddenly drained of colour. "What is it?"

"'Club' burned down over twenty years ago. I know this, because I was there."

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